

John Femino, MD, DFASAM, MRO
Femino Consultancy
21A Plainfield Pike
Foster, RI 02825
johnfemino@gmail.com

April 29, 2021

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chair, House Finance Committee

Re: Article 11, 2021 Governor's Budget

Dear Mr. Chairman and Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee:

I am opposed to the current bills being introduced for legalization of recreational marijuana. I base my opposition as a board certified addiction medicine physician and former member of the previous Marijuana Study Commission.

We can learn a lot from our past legislative approach to legalization and taxation of other addictive substances. Alcohol taxes have not been increased in many years and tobacco settlements have been squandered. Promises of marijuana tax dollars for funding schools, youth and affected individuals have not materialized. The only consistent consequence of legalization is to fuel the "Addiction Sales Industry", create hordes of lobbyists, and develop an infrastructure that disproportionately supports the sellers. Study after study shows that for every dollar of tax revenue generated, the costs are 4-7 times higher. Who is negatively affected parallels sales data – 30% of users account for 70% of sales.

We continue to mimic other states legislative models and use these as pressure tactics to encourage passing of laws that are destined to continue past mistakes. We hear optimistic claims of how much money will be generated by legalization and how it will provide fiscal support to those affected – the truth is that taxation only generates about 1% of total state revenue – a pittance compared to the costs of regulation, public health and safety. We don't need another re-write of last year's bill. We can come up with something better.

So how can legalization be safely accomplished? I encourage everyone to review the recently published ASAM public policy statement for guidance. This science based approach focuses on issues of commercialization, tax structures, public safety, mental health and medical costs and the importance of public health leadership on organizational structures. We have a once in a lifetime opportunity to structure legislation that is science based and public health focused, rather than commercialization models that benefit the seller not user.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Femino", with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Femino, MD